

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 16, 2019

Mr. Sundar Pichai
Chief Executive Officer
Google, LLC
1600 Amphitheatre Parkway
Mountain View, CA, 94043

Dear Mr. Pichai:

We write regarding an apparent flaw in Google's mapping products that poses a serious threat of misdirecting women seeking important health care. According to media reports¹ from as early as 2018², there are certain situations where Google search and Google maps seem to mislead women seeking reproductive care services, in particular abortion care, by directing them to non-existent providers or fraudulent operators providing non-medical advice. The availability of accurate, reliable information about health care providers is a central issue impacting reproductive rights, public health, and health equity, and we request additional information and swift action to remedy this situation. During this time of unprecedented attacks on women's health and restrictions on women's access to health care, it is as important as ever that Google be a reliable source of information for women seeking care.

With the Trump-Pence Administration preventing providers in the Title X network from referring patients for abortion care and the enactment of dangerous and ill-conceived abortion restrictions in states across the country, women are more likely to use search engines like yours to find the health care services they need.³ We also understand that crisis pregnancy centers, which often pose as abortion providers in order to confuse women and make it harder for them to locate legitimate health care providers, including those that offer abortion services, likely complicate the ability of search engines to parse legitimate providers from false ones.

We understand and appreciate that Google has committed publicly to providing accurate, transparent, and relevant information while making efforts to remedy the misinformation. But clearly efforts to date have not been sufficient, as women seeking abortion care continue to be directed to misidentified businesses and false businesses, rather than legitimate reproductive health care providers. We ask that Google take proactive steps and devote additional resources toward improving relevant software and assign additional employees to actively verify and monitor the legitimacy of businesses identified as top search results or who advertise within this

¹ https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/ywap9b/google-maps-is-still-directing-women-seeking-abortions-to-pro-life-clinics-and-a-memorial-for-the-unborn

² <https://gizmodo.com/how-google-maps-leads-women-seeking-abortions-astray-1822882758>

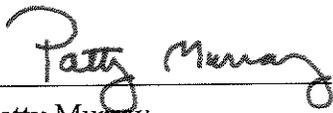
³ <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/google-search-trends-correlate-with-abortion-rates-policies-101442814.html>; <https://www.waxahachietx.com/news/20190611/abortion-searches-reach-record-highs-topic-was-top-google-trend-twice-last-month>

practice area. We also ask that you commit to periodically reviewing the accuracy of the results being provided by the current Google algorithm in response to users seeking reproductive health care, as well as determining the efficacy of the new health care and medicines policy for abortion that went into effect June 2019.⁴ We believe these efforts will help ensure Google is not contributing to the challenges that women are facing in accessing reproductive health care.

We also request that Google provide a staff briefing regarding the specific steps the company has taken to date to address this misinformation, as well as planned efforts moving forward to ensure women searching for reproductive health care resources are able to rely on Google to provide them with accurate results.

Thank you for considering our request. Please contact Laurel Sakai with Senator Murray's HELP Committee staff at 202-224-0767 with any questions.

Sincerely,



Patty Murray
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

⁴ https://support.google.com/adspolicy/answer/9297839?hl=en&ref_topic=29265